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Chair: John Williamson



Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1635)

[Translation]

The Chair (John Williamson (Saint John—St. Croix, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 29 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[English]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. I believe all members are attending in the room, but of course the remote option is available on the Zoom application.

I'd like to remind participants of the following points. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. If we get into a debate, please raise your hand and catch my eye or the clerk's. We will endeavour to keep an accurate speaking list.

[Translation]

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, February 9, the committee is resuming consideration of Bil C-230, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts (debt forgiveness registry).

[English]

We have with us today the officials from our last meeting on Monday, who were very good about rearranging their schedules to be here so unexpectedly. We have officials from the Canada Revenue Agency, the Department of Finance and the Treasury Board Secretariat. I want to thank you all for being here. I hope it will be brief. I think it might be, but if not, we're pleased that you're here to answer our questions.

We're going to resume where we left off on Monday, March 23, with the consideration of amendment G-3.

(On clause 1)

The Chair: Mr. Chambers, I had said I would recognize you right off the bat. I understand you're going to pass things over, but the floor is yours, please.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate everyone's patience while we had an ability to have discussions among the parties.

I appreciate our officials being back with us again today, and also the thorough suggestions and answers they provided at our last meeting.

Mr. Chair, I believe I am in a position to withdraw the sub-amendment that I had jumped the gun on making and turn the floor, with your indulgence, over to the parliamentary secretary.

The Chair: All right. Very good. We can hand it over easily.

Mr. Turnbull, you have the floor. I believe you have something to propose to us.

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Yes. Thank you, Chair.

I'm really glad that we were able to resolve the issue that was in contention at the last meeting. I didn't think we were that far apart, but we were looking for a solution. We have since resolved that.

The legislative clerk has notified me that there was a slight issue of clarification with the French translation of the version that we had sent along, and we now have a new, slightly revised version that will clarify that. I'll just raise this issue that the clerk raised to me just before the meeting, so we can all be clear. Basically, the solution we found is to have the specification of the reason for each deletion within the registry: whether it's sensitive, personal or confidential information. That would be identified. I think that's what we had come to as a solution, so the language should reflect that in both English and French.

With your indulgence, Mr. Chair, I think we need just a moment to make sure that I've received that new version. I can't read it into the record, so I'm going to ask my colleague Ms. Tesser Derksen to read it in, because I can't amend my own amendment.

The Chair: Sure. You said you needed a few moments. Do you want me to suspend?

I'll suspend for a couple of minutes. We'll come right back.

This meeting is suspended.

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1635)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I'm going to recognize Ms. Tesser Derksen, please.

Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm moving a subamendment to create proposed subsection (3.1). If you'd like me to read that into the record, I can do so.

The proposed wording is as follows: "If any information is excluded from the registry under subsection (3), the President of the Treasury Board must identify in the registry whether the information was excluded for reasons relating to the protection of confidential information, personal information or sensitive information."

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you. That has been sent to everyone by email for your review.

Ms. Tesser Derksen, if you have any more comments on it, the floor will be yours, but I think the subamendment is self-explanatory.

First I'll turn to Mr. Chambers. Are you satisfied with it? All right.

Is there any debate on the subamendment as proposed by Ms. Tesser Derksen?

[*Translation*]

Our colleague from the Bloc Québécois would like to speak.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Just in the spirit of the matter, since information is referring to a business, is "information" the right term?

What I was looking for is the reason or justification. If a business is excluded from the registry under subsection 3, the President of the Treasury Board must specify it in the registry and provide the reason for this exclusion. So, if any information is excluded from the registry, can we know whether it was excluded for reasons relating to the protection of confidential information, personal information or sensitive information or whether it's according to the reasons stated in the bill?

I don't know if it's a question of language, because I don't believe I have the necessary skills to compare with what's proposed in English, but I think the idea is to ensure an excluded business can be identified and that the justification for this exclusion is available.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Ryan Turnbull: I think the attempt at a solution that we discussed last time, when we were at this slight impasse, was to identify, in every case in the registry where there was information that was not being disclosed, whether the reason for the redaction or the non-disclosure of that information was that it was personal information, confidential information or sensitive information.

I think there are those three reasons. If you're looking for a lot more detail than that, I don't think that's what we had agreed on. I would suggest that this is a version of.... Well, I think it gives a reason and a rationale for why those elements were not disclosed in the registry.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: I think it's more assertive than clear, but we can live with that.

I also think the French version should instead say "*si une information est exclue*", because it's on a case-by-case basis when it comes to businesses. I'd put it more in singular. Every time a business is excluded, we want to know why, and the justification is one of the three factors mentioned.

I'm not an expert, so if the legislative clerks are comfortable that the information we want can be provided, then I can support that.

The Chair: Just give us 10 seconds.

[*English*]

I want to suspend again for a couple of minutes to seek clarification. We'll come right back to you.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: I bring this meeting back into session.

What's happened is that Mr. Lemire's grammatical change is to remove the "s" in the French text on "*exclues*", based on what he said, based on discussion with the legislative clerk and then based on their checking as well that this would be correct.

Is it agreed to do that? Could I have the approval? Just a voice vote is fine, unless I hear any nay votes. We will have a voice vote on approving the subamendment with the grammatical change that was made in the French version.

(Subamendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Amendment as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now, this might seem a bit counterintuitive if you have not done this before. We'll now go through the bill and we'll pass the clauses, and then there is another amendment, G-4, which we'll address at the end. I'm going to flag that now, because folks might wonder why we're finishing up the bill before doing all of the amendments.

Shall clause 1 carry as amended?

(Clause 1 as amended agreed to)

(Clauses 2 to 7 agreed to)

The Chair: That brings us to the bill as drafted.

Now we're moving to G-4. This is a new clause.

Mr. Turnbull, would you like to address this, please?

Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair.

I'll read the following motion into the record. It's amendment G-4. It is that Bill C-230 be amended by adding after line 13 on page 3 the following new clause:

"Coordinating Amendments
Bill C-15

8(1) Subsections (2) and (3) apply if Bill C-15, introduced in the 1st session of the 45th Parliament and entitled Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 1 (in this section referred to as the "other Act"), receives royal assent.

(2) If subsection 126(2) of the other Act comes into force before section 6 of this Act, then that section 6 is deemed never to have come into force and is repealed.

(3) If subsection 126(2) of the other Act comes into force on the same day as section 6 of this Act, then that section 6 is deemed never to have come into force and is repealed."

This is a coordinating amendment that I believe just attempts to align and create consistency between clauses in Bill C-230 and existing legislation, including Bill C-15, which is the budget implementation act. This ensures that the legislation works coherently with other acts and avoids duplication or conflicts.

Bill C-15 would also repeal the Digital Services Tax Act, and subsection 126(2) would make the repeal retroactively effective as of June 20, 2024, the date of its original enactment.

It's for those reasons that we've put forward this amendment. It's to ensure consistency.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Chambers, I'll turn the floor over to you. If you'd like the officials to validate what Mr. Turnbull just said, we have them here.

Adam Chambers: Perhaps I'll just confirm. I think I know the answer.

This does not change any substance of the bill, as far as you're aware. Is that correct?

Isabelle Brault (Director General, Legislative Policy Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency): There's no concern.

Adam Chambers: Thank you very much.

On the wonderful advice of our officials, I think this is acceptable.

The Chair: All right, then, we're looking for a voice vote on G-4, which would create a new clause, clause 8.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: That is passed. Very good.

Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill as amended for the use of the House of Commons at report stage?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's very good. I believe that ends our business here on Bill C-230.

I'm told that this is the first time this committee has considered a PMB in 21 years, so congratulations. Thank you.

I will excuse the witnesses. Thank you very much for being here today and for indulging us in getting this resolved quickly.

I'll excuse the legislative clerks as well. Thank you very much for your assistance and guidance on this. We hope to see you back before 21 years.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'll suspend for about two minutes to get everyone settled in here.

• (1650)

(Pause)

• (1655)

The Chair: I'll bring the meeting back into session.

Before I recognize Monsieur Deltell, I just want to get to this note.

I'm not sure how long this session is going to go, but I just want to alert members to an upcoming visit to Parliament by the United Kingdom's Public Accounts Committee as part of their inquiry into the restoration and renewal program of the Palace of Westminster.

Their visit is scheduled over two days in mid-April. I'm going to work to schedule an informal meeting on Tuesday, April 14. While in Ottawa, the chair of the United Kingdom's Public Accounts Committee would like to meet with our members to discuss the Centre Block rehabilitation, including project progress, long-term vision, costing and governance.

I just want to flag this for committee members. I'm going to endeavour to also invite some of the parliamentarians who are involved more closely with the restoration, but of course our committee considered the Auditor General's report. I would encourage you all to come once I have a time for that.

It would be a good opportunity, as well, to engage with the U.K. Public Accounts Committee. That's the committee I've engaged with the most of any committee around the world in the last couple of years. As they are part of the Mother of Parliaments, there are always lessons to be learned there. However, in this case, they are coming to speak to us because they want to know how our restoration has gone—the good, the bad and the hopefully not too ugly.

There is a unique wrinkle, in that apparently their parliamentarians, the members of their House of Commons, are refusing to leave Westminster for renovations. We at least have done it in a way that is more efficient. We vacated the building to get the work done. However, apparently some of their members of Parliament are saying that they have a right to be there and that they won't leave their offices. We'll leave that problem to them, but we will certainly have lessons we can share with them. I'll share those details with you over the recess as I get them finalized.

Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Are they going on the tour?

The Chair: Yes, they will be, I think, seeing the inside of the building and all of that. They also know that our Auditor General did a report on it. I think they will be meeting with the Auditor General as well, but there might be some lessons they can pick up from members of Parliament about how we felt with respect to the renovations that are happening there, how we dealt with it, the progress that's been made and some of the negotiations that have happened to ensure that the building is to our liking when we move back into it.

There's more on that to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move a motion in accordance with what we all agreed on following our friendly agreement, or what could be called a moral commitment.

[*English*]

By the way, maybe we could talk about a “gentlemen and gentlemen's agreement”. That would be more specific and respectful in 2026.

Seriously, let me get back to our motion.

[*Translation*]

Our motion essentially seeks to allow the mayor of Laval and the Minister of National Revenue to shed some light on the event that deeply shocked those who were made aware of the situation. I'm referring to the case where the former mayor convicted of fraud had hidden money in another country on which the Canada Revenue Agency asked the municipality to pay an additional tax, essentially making it pay twice for the fraud. We find that completely unacceptable.

We know there are ongoing discussions, but we feel Canadians have a right to know what happened and what led to this decision. I'd like to remind everyone that the Government of Quebec acted more fairly and responsibly by deciding not to exercise this prerogative. I'd also remind everyone that the person who made this decision, the former Minister of Finance of the Quebec Government, Mr. Carlos Leitão, is the Parliamentary Secretary to the current federal Minister of Finance. I therefore invite the government to take direction from its parliamentary secretary, who, as early as 2016,

acted in good faith and very appropriately, and adopt the same approach.

Now, before we go any further, I'd like to remind everyone that the objective is to get to the bottom of this.

[*English*]

In good faith, what we want is to have the minister and the mayor explain the situation. Keep in mind, folks, that what we are talking about here with this issue is something that can apply to other cities. It can also apply to other situations like that.

Secondly, keep in mind that it is our duty to ask questions of the Crown minister, and it is the duty of the Crown minister to address the issue and to answer questions. This is a privilege that we have, but also among the privileges we have is protection. We can say here what we have to say without being afraid of having some people say, okay, we'll see you in court. This is a privilege we have, and it is also a responsibility.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

That's why I leave it to each parliamentarian's sense of responsibility. As parliamentarians, we have privileges, and first among those is to be able to ask questions or make comments that we might hesitate to ask or make outside the House for fear of being sued. We can say things for which we cannot be sued. It's our privilege, but also our duty. I therefore invite all parliamentarians at this table to support this proposal.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Deltell.

[*English*]

Ms. Yip, you have the floor.

Jean Yip: Mr. Deltell, could you clarify? Your motion says, “invite the Minister of National Revenue”. Do you mean to say “Minister of Finance”, or is it the secretary of state for national revenue?

Gérard Deltell: Thank you so much. You're right. Obviously, this is the same person: François-Philippe Champagne, the member from Shawinigan, a guy who is very happy when he has the floor. I think he will not be very shy.

I'm sorry. You're right. I identify in my presentation the finance minister. In this specific issue, we're talking about the national revenue minister.

We also know that in the new government, the Prime Minister appointed a secretary of state, another guy who appreciates it when he has the floor. I have no problem with that, but at the end of the day, with all the respect that I have for the secretary of state, the real one is the minister. I want to be very respectful to my friend who is the state secretary, but at the end of the day, the real guy, the guy behind that, is the national revenue minister, and that is François-Philippe Champagne. I'm pretty sure that he will enjoy being there.

The Chair: I will recognize Mr. Lemire first, and then I'll go to Ms. Tesser Derksen.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the member for his answer. It does make sense to hear from the minister on a case like this. I just read the motion again, and I too would like to ask the member a question.

Wouldn't it also be interesting to invite former Mayor Vaillancourt to appear before the committee, without necessarily sending a summons, which we can do? Can't we just invite him to come and answer our questions?

Gérard Deltell: We think there are two parties at play here. The third is the population of Laval, who'd have to pay for this decision, but they're represented by the current mayor. CRA is asking the municipality to take action. That's why we believe the best option is to invite the party making the request and the party who'd be on the hook. This approach was agreed to with the municipality, no one else. That's why we think for the moment, we should just invite the current mayor and the minister. If we think we can go further, we'll consider it. However, I think we're already covering our bases in this file, which is delicate, because people don't want to pay twice.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Tesser Derksen, please go ahead.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to my colleague, who is a gentleman.

We spoke about this matter, and I have been reading a lot about it. It certainly is very egregious. I appreciate his concern and the fact that he has brought it before this committee.

I want to propose some amendments to the motion, Mr. Chair. I have four. I can do those individually, if I may start with the first one.

The Chair: You can do that, unless you want to make them all one motion. Otherwise, yes, do them one at a time.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: I'll do them one at a time.

The Chair: Please send them to the clerk. If they're translated, that's even better.

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Did Mr. Deltell move his motion?

• (1705)

The Chair: Mr. Deltell, would you like to move your motion, please?

Gérard Deltell: I thought I tabled the motion a few weeks ago.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I understood that you were bringing the motion back to the floor for committee.

[Translation]

Is that correct?

Gérard Deltell: Yes. Thank you for setting the record straight for all of us.

The notice of motion is as follows:

That, in light of recent reporting that the Canada Revenue Agency is requiring the City of Laval to issue a payment of approximately \$1 million to former mayor Gilles Vaillancourt in order for him to remit taxes on funds previously stolen from the municipality and later returned, the committee invite the Minister of National Revenue and officials from the Canada Revenue Agency and the mayor of Laval to appear before the committee for no fewer than two hours at the earliest opportunity to explain the agency's decision-making process in this matter

and to clarify the Liberal government's position on requiring a municipality to transfer taxpayer dollars to a convicted former official for the purpose of settling a tax liability related to proceeds of crime.

The Chair: Okay.

I am told that there is a small error in the French version. What is it?

Joëlle Malo (Committee Researcher): I just wanted to point out that the word "*reportages*" should be singular.

The Chair: Okay. That's okay, but thank you.

Ms. Tesser Derksen, you have the floor.

[English]

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thank you very much.

Amendment number one that I recommend—and in my version it's about four lines in—is to strike out the following words: "the Minister of National Revenue". I'll speak to the rationale.

I fully understand the need for transparency and for questions and answers to be exchanged in this committee. As someone with a legal background, though, I understand that there is an ongoing legal matter. I'm sensitive to the fact that the minister may not be able to answer as fulsomely as he would like, given that there are sensitivities around the legal proceedings. I think it would be frustrating for all of us to ask questions that he simply cannot answer because there are legal proceedings going on.

That's the first amendment I would suggest.

[Translation]

The Chair: Okay.

Would someone like to speak?

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, can we have the amendment in writing? I just want to make sure we all understand it.

The Chair: Yes. It will take a few minutes. I think it's just removing the reference to the Minister of National Revenue.

[English]

I'm going to suspend until it's sent out.

• (1705)

(Pause)

• (1715)

The Chair: We are back in session.

The email has been sent. Ms. Tesser Derksen is revealing her other amendments. None of them are a surprise. We'll deal with them one at a time, though.

The first amendment is to remove "the Minister of National Revenue".

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

G rard Deltell: Regarding the first proposed amendment, I want to thank our colleagues and commend them for using verbatim, not to say letter for letter, our motion, including the misprinted s in “reportages”. I invite them to verify the spelling of “reportage”.

On a more serious note, we completely disagree with the government MPs' suggestion not to invite the responsible minister.

Let's go over the sequence of events. The Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, which falls under the federal Minister of Finance and National Revenue's responsibility, required the City of Laval to issue a payment of approximately \$1 million. That's story isn't just out of the blue. The CRA made a request to a city. There's a political debate, and especially a fiscally related debate that weighs quite heavily on the City of Laval. That's why the mayor is refusing to make the requested payment and is looking to reach an agreement with the CRA. Let's not forget that in 2016, Revenu Qu bec agreed to set aside such a request that makes no sense to those who've already paid and might have to pay again.

The government has two options. Either it comes to an agreement with the city or it drops the case as did the Quebec government about 10 years ago. I want to remind you that the person who led the file for the Government of Quebec was Carlos Leit o, the current MP for Laval and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. In short, if the Minister of National Revenue wants relevant information on this file, he just has to turn in his chair in the House of Commons and talk to the MP for Marc-Aur le-Fortin. Mr. Leit o can explain to him in detail why he made the right decision and why the current government isn't making the right one.

I also want to remind everyone, as I did earlier, that it's our duty and responsibility to ask questions, and it's the minister's duty and responsibility to answer them. Someone said earlier that the minister probably can't divulge all the information. We can't presume what the questions or answers will be, but I've seen people at this table before refuse to answer. They were at peace with themselves, with their decision. However, a decision was made, and this is not a confidential file. The players are very clearly identified. On one side, there's a convicted felon. On the other side, there's a city grappling with this problem. Nothing's confidential.

We won't put the minister on the spot to give us details on the file of someone who didn't pay his taxes 22 years ago or however long ago it was. No, we're talking about a national story, millions of dollars, and the CRA's decision that makes no sense, when you consider Revenu Qu bec adopted the right approach. If the minister doesn't want to answer, that's his prerogative and his right. Actually, let's talk about the law. We have parliamentary immunity as parliamentarians. Here, I can say a lot of nonsense, and I won't be sued for it, but it's a matter of honour and dignity. The same applies in this case, a real story with real consequences for the citizens of Laval. The person who made the decision, in this case the minister responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency, needs to explain themselves. I'm sure the minister has some interesting arguments to offer.

We know the man well. Mr. Champagne is not exactly the most discreet person. I jokingly say all the time that when he walks into a room, he starts talking to the surveillance cameras. I'm joking, of course. Mr. Champagne is someone I respect and admire a lot. We know that he has a lot of ambitions, and not just for the country, but for himself. That's great. In politics, if you don't have ambition, you might not be in the right place.

I'm sure Mr. Champagne has things to say and clarifications to give the citizens of Laval. When I questioned him in the House of Commons three weeks ago, he publicly admitted he'd had discussions with the mayor of Laval. We won't ask for a transcript of the conversation, but I'm sure there are some interesting bits of information that deserve to be made public. Moreover, committee members are protected by parliamentary privilege, but it comes with responsibilities. A minister's main responsibility is to answer for the management of public funds, especially since, in this case, it has a direct impact on a municipality and involves millions of dollars. Therefore, on this side of the House, we will not support the amendment as presented by the government MPs.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor.

S bastien Lemire: We're meeting in public, but I'll still take the opportunity to intervene.

Mr. Deltell, when you're speaking nonsense, we have to correct you. Parliamentary Secretary Leit o is the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Industry, not the Minister of Finance. That's just a friendly correction.

Regarding the minister's accountability, we support inviting the minister responsible.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Are there any other comments?

I'm hearing none.

Madam Clerk, could you call the vote, please?

It's four and four. I will vote no.

(Amendment negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Ms. Tesser Derksen, you have the floor again for your next amendment to the motion.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The next amendment would be to the sentence after the one we were dealing with, where it says “Canada Revenue Agency”. We would delete the word “and”.

The Chair: Is it the one right before “the mayor of Laval”? Why don't you combine that with your next one? We'll deal with it in one.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: We would delete “and”, keep “the”, add “current” and proceed with “mayor”. It would read, “Canada Revenue Agency, the current mayor of Laval”. Do you see that?

Do you want me to keep going?

The Chair: Yes.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: There would be a comma, and then “and Mr. Vaillancourt”.

The Chair: That really gets to the meat of it.

I don't think we need “current”, because there is one mayor.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: We're also talking about a previous mayor.

The Chair: We can do it, but I don't think it's actually necessary.

We're going to clean up the “and” and we're going to add “current”, but it's really to add “Mr. Vaillancourt”. All right.

[Translation]

G rard Deltell: Mr. Chair, can we pause for a moment? I'd like to consult my colleagues.

The Chair: I really don't like doing that.

Do you have any comments, Mr. Lemire?

S bastien Lemire: I'd like to consult as well.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. We'll suspend briefly. Thank you.

• (1720) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1725)

The Chair: I call this meeting back into session.

[Translation]

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

G rard Deltell: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We are rejecting this amendment for the reasons I gave just a few minutes ago in answering Mr. Lemire's question. As you know, we work as a team and we have to make sure everyone agrees. That's the way we work and I hope it never changes.

So we disagree with that position, because the two parties being targeted are CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, and the City of Laval. CRA asked the City of Laval to pay approximately \$1 million. We want to invite these two parties so they can explain themselves, because they're the two parties responsible.

We want to ask CRA to send representatives to explain the technical details, and we want to invite the minister responsible to come and explain himself because, in our parliamentary system, ministers are responsible for certain actions, particularly like this one.

Let's also keep in mind that the citizens of Laval, who've been robbed for years, are the victims here. A legal solution was agreed to, because the guilty party was convicted and an amount was seized and repatriated. However, the people of Laval are now being asked to pay, and they are not to be robbed a second time.

I'm a little surprised to see the government MPs want Mr. Vaillancourt to testify. This case directly involves the agency, since it gave the order to get the money back, and the victims, that is the citizens of Laval.

So we want to shed some light on this case, and it must be done by talking to the minister responsible for CRA and the City of Laval, which is the victim here.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. McKinnon.

Ron McKinnon: I have a question for Mr. Deltell.

I don't understand why the city is going to pay \$1 million to this fellow who stole money from them.

G rard Deltell: With all my respect, Mr. McKinnon, this is why we want to have the minister in the box.

Ron McKinnon: That doesn't explain why the city is going to pay him money.

G rard Deltell: This is exactly the heart of the problem. This is why people are upset. The mayor, after a trial, was convicted.

[Translation]

He was found guilty and convicted, and now, as the motion says, CRA is requiring the City of Laval to pay former mayor Gilles Vaillancourt about \$1 million so he can pay his taxes. CRA is asking the City of Laval to pay a convicted felon.

That's exactly why we want the minister to come and explain himself.

• (1730)

[English]

Ron McKinnon: I understand now. It's not the city that decided to make this payment. It's the government that's requesting it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Very good. The back-and-forth was a bit unorthodox.

Monsieur Lemire.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: The Bloc Québécois won't be supporting the amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

[English]

Madam Clerk, could you call the vote?

We have a tie. I will cast a vote as no, please.

(Amendment negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Ms. Tesser Derksen, you have the floor again, please.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The final proposed amendment is about eight lines down. After “the Agency’s decision making process in this matter and to clarify the”, I would like to remove “Liberal” and just go with “Government”. I think it's pretty clear to everyone which party forms government.

I don't want to politicize things. We're a non-partisan committee. I think it would cheapen what is otherwise a very noble endeavour.

Gérard Deltell: Well—

The Chair: Just hold on, Monsieur Deltell.

Do you want to remove “Liberal” and replace it with “federal”, or just “Government”?

Kristina Tesser Derksen: My proposal would be to just have it as “Government”.

I think we need to add an apostrophe in the version the clerk recently sent us.

The Chair: Sure. Okay.

Monsieur Deltell.

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let's keep up the spirit of collaboration. We can acknowledge that the Liberal government doesn't want to identify itself as “Liberal” in a motion. That's fine. We acknowledge this.

[English]

With good will, we will support this amendment.

The Chair: Is it agreed?

(Amendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Now let's debate the motion as amended.

Monsieur Deltell, I'll recognize you right off the bat.

[Translation]

Mr. Deltell, we made a very small amendment.

We simply removed the word “Liberal”.

Gérard Deltell: We'll now reread the motion before us.

That, in light of recent reporting that the Canada Revenue Agency is requiring the City of Laval to issue a payment of approximately \$1 million to former mayor Gilles Vaillancourt in order for him to remit taxes on funds previously stolen from the municipality and later returned, the committee invite the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and officials from the Canada Revenue Agency and the mayor of Laval to appear before the committee for no fewer than two hours at the earliest opportunity to explain the agency's decision-making process in this matter and to clarify the government's position on requiring a municipality to transfer taxpayer dollars to a convicted former official for the purpose of settling a tax liability related to proceeds of crime.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Lemire, the floor is yours.

Sébastien Lemire: I believe that the Liberals proposed two French versions of the phrase “*afin qu'il puisse acquitter*”. The original motion read “*afin qu'il puisse acquitter des impôts*”, whereas the second version reads “*afin qu'il remette les impôts*”. Is the meaning the same?

The question is more for the governing party. I want to know whether it also proposes this amendment in the original text.

• (1735)

The Chair: That was a bit fast for me. I'm not talking about the language. Wait a second so that I can find it in Mr. Deltell's motion.

It is indeed “*acquitter*”, just as in the original motion.

Sébastien Lemire: Okay. That works.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any further debate on this?

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 8; nays 0 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to suspend. We're going to go in camera. We'll come back here in five to 10 minutes.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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